

The Library Assistant :

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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

MARCH GENERAL MEETING.

The next meeting of the Association will be held on **Thursday, March 10th**, at the **CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY, FULHAM ROAD, LONDON, S.W.**, at 7.30 p.m. A paper will be read by **T. E. TURNBULL** (Senior Assistant, Newcastle-upon-Tyne), on "The Initial Stock of a Public Library."

This will be followed by a paper by **ARNOLD G. BURT** (Chief Librarian, Handsworth Public Libraries) on "Publishers: Their Stocks and Their Catalogues." All Assistants and their friends are welcome. Light refreshments will be provided.

The New Central Library, Fulham, the latest addition to the Metropolitan Libraries, has been built out of funds provided by Dr. Andrew Carnegie. It was erected last year at a cost of over £15,000, the architect being Mr. H. T. Hare, F.R.I.B.A. It is situated in the Fulham Road, on the site of the old building, and is within two minutes' walk of Parson's Green Station, and five minutes from Walham Green Station on the District Railway. Motor Buses from the City to Putney pass the door.

WHIST DRIVE.

The Social Gathering this year will take the form of a Whist Drive, and will be held in conjunction with the Islington Libraries' Club, at the Islington Central Library, 68 Holloway Road, N., on Wednesday, April 6th, 1910, at 7.30 p.m. The price of tickets (including refreshments) will be 1/6 for members and 2/- for non-members. It is hoped that a large gathering of members and friends will be present.

Tickets may be obtained of Miss Savage, Islington Central Library, and of the Officers of the Association.

NORTH EASTERN BRANCH.

The next meeting of the North Eastern Branch will be held, by kind permission of Mr. J. A. Charlton Deas, Librarian and Director, at the **SUNDERLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY**, on Wednesday, March 16th, 1910. The following Papers will be read:—

Member's Paper: "Brown versus Dewey: a Comparison of the Subject and Decimal Classification Schemes," by R. WRIGHT, Sunderland.

Associate's Paper: "The Outlook of the Library Assistant," by R. W. HENDERSON, South Shields. At this meeting the result of the election of Officers, 1910-11, will be declared. Particulars of other arrangements will be communicated to members later.

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION: PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES.

The Annual Presentation of Certificates will take place in the London School of Economics, on Wednesday, March 16th, 1910, at 8 p.m. The Director, the Hon. W. Pember Reeves, will make the presentation. All Assistants will be welcomed.

DISCUSSION ON LIBRARY EXTENSION. ARE READINGS AND READING CIRCLES DESIRABLE?

The Affirmative.

Providing all circumstances in the shape of convenient meeting places and sufficiency of staff are favourable, I am emphatically of opinion that these activities are desirable. The benefit to be derived by the individual from joining a few others in the systematic pursuit of a definite line of reading is incalculable. Anyone who takes an interest in the reading of an average public library borrower must be struck with the vast amount of desultory reading which goes on, and we know that such reading is not productive of the best results. It really matters little how estimable a book may be in itself; unless it is read with a definite purpose, its perusal is of little permanent value to the reader. We are all familiar with the man who invariably selects a book from the show-case on the counter—this week he reads a popular biography of Oliver Cromwell; next week Williams' "Romance of Modern Locomotion," then he goes away with Sir Robert Ball's "Story of the Heavens," after which he runs through Beveridge's book on "Unemployment." A course like this I know doesn't do a man any harm; indeed he is probably far better than if he contented himself with a course of Guy Boothby, followed up with W. W. Jacobs and Max Pemberton, but what I do maintain is, that if such an individual were to devote his energy to prescribed courses of English History or Roman Mythology or Japanese Art, he would be much more of a cultured man in the finish than he would become after a thousand years of miscellaneous reading. To proceed in this fashion is to waste both energy and opportunities, and if persons of this character can be induced to join a reading circle, then a motive is supplied and purpose introduced, and a real educational process begins. There can be no argument which can gainsay this, for we know, probably all of us, from personal experience, how much more we get out of a book if we can discuss its details with another person reading it at the same time; if it is a novel, we live out its story in a far fuller degree, and if it

be a work of more solid character, we get an infinitely better grasp of its plan and argument by debating with others the questions it raises.

To secure the best results, a circle should not include more than six members; so far as possible there should be an equal division of labour—a circle leader, a secretary, a dictionary searcher, and so on. Meetings should be weekly if possible, and prescribed portions of the books read between meetings as well as parallel reading when necessary. If it is possible for a member of the library staff to be circle leader he can assist in a number of ways to maintain the interest of the work by suggesting new sources of information, parallel readings and so on.

Readings are rather different from reading circles, but properly arranged they may exercise a very beneficial influence. Frequently they are the means of opening up new worlds of thought and interest, and by their agency I believe many folks have been introduced to great books they would never have otherwise dreamed of opening. I remember a series of readings one evening from Boswell's Johnson, and it came as a revelation to not a few that the book was a thing of interest for pleasurable reading, and not a dry-as-dust volume repugnant to all but the literary student. By all means have readings, but be careful they are not allowed to degenerate into "Selections from the Humorous Writers of the 20th Century," or frivolous things of that description.

The chief claim these activities have upon us librarians is, that they offer opportunities for curing the habit of desultory reading—it is a distinctly bad habit—where it exists, effort ought to be made to cure it, and where it does not exist, there is still need for effort to prevent it. And readings and reading circles provide a means by which the desire to read may be controlled and directed into the right channels. Therefore, there can be no question that such activities are eminently desirable.

WM. BENSON THORNE.

The Negative.

Mr. Thorne bases his chief reason for the desirability of reading circles on the belief that they would do away to a large extent with desultory reading. I am not of that opinion. The majority of our borrowers are fiction readers, for whom a reading circle would have no interest; the minority who are students would have no need for it, as their desire is to read all the best books on the subject in which they are interested.

My greatest opposition to Mr. Thorne, however, is that he, following in the footsteps of Mr. Potter

Briscoe (L.A. Record Vol. 5, p. 219) wants the librarian to be the leader of the circle. I have always understood that a librarian was responsible for the administration of a library system, which is generally taken to mean the efficient control of the establishment, and the proper classification and cataloguing of the books. But other duties are now being tacked on, which, if persisted in, will tend to make the librarian a "Jack of all Trades" and master of none.

It is to the teacher we should look to educate the children in the love of reading, and in this I find myself in agreement with the Chief Librarian of Leeds, who, in his Annual Report, says: "I venture to think that the time is not far distant when it will be necessary for the Education Department to make it compulsory for the Teacher to watch over the reading of the children in a more satisfactory manner than is done at present."

For those who desire a critical knowledge of the masterpieces of English literature there are the lectures given by competent Professors under the auspices of the Board for the Extension of University Teaching.

J. FREDERICK HOGG.

SHOULD LIBRARIES ADVERTISE; AND, IF SO, TO WHAT EXTENT.

The Affirmative.

I have always resented the amiable dogmatisms of those who would "delimit the sphere of the library and the librarian;" the sacerdotal attitude of those who would have us at the library shelves and never anywhere else. The work of the library, say they, and wisdom affirms their moralising, is to provide books and to make them accessible. But the last part of their definition admits of wide interpretation. Books may be made accessible a thousand ways, and are not these thousand ways within our sphere? The librarian of to-day is abandoning the quiescent attitude of his professional grandfathers, and now goes out into the highways and hedges and compels the reader to come in. Who is Dr. Dryasdust that he should presume to say what is and what is not librarianship? he asks. All things are fitting that create readers. He has inaugurated lectures, readings, reading circles, has published bulletins, held exhibitions, has even told stories; and his ultimate aim has always been to create readers. All these things, I think, are legitimate. The objections to advertising are attractive and superficial. It is beneath the dignity of the professional man; the lawyer, the doctor, the veterinary surgeon, all refuse to advertise; or, rather, are compelled to desist from it by the severe code of etiquette controlling their doings; but the clergyman advertises considerably and so does

the professional teacher, and these line on more closely with the librarian than any of the others. Advertising means publicity, and publicity means success in business. Librarianship, I am proud to think, is a profession—at least our elders tell us so with supreme and overaweing gravity—but I have also to recognise that it is a business; that the highest academic qualifications unless accompanied by administrative ability and a grip of the essentials of finance, are inadequate to make the full librarian. And the administration of any business involves judicious advertising. Do not be bored by another reference to America. America is the land of blatant advertisement in commercial life, of really vigorous advertisement in library circles, and America is the land where libraries are most appreciated. It is not because the American reads more than the Briton, as an American writer, Price Collier, asserts in a particularly silly and inaccurate paragraph on English public libraries in his "England and the English," (he says there are only some two hundred rate-supported libraries in England); that is settled by the fact that our issues are comparatively much larger; it is because of the healthy publicity existing there, and the lack of active public appreciation here is owing to our lack of such publicity, which probably accounts also for Mr. Collier's queer figures and conclusions.

So much for the need, but how far are we to go? All the activities we have discussed to-night are forms of advertisement, and therefore advisable wherever suitable conditions prevail. Should we go outside the library building? I think it would be well if each library had a special lecture on its aims and facilities, and also a librarian who could deliver it to every suitable society in the town. I think the books should be sent to public lectures, rather than lists; the possible loss of a few books is a small risk in library missionary work. I would not go so far as the well-known librarian who would have the books delivered from house to house with the milk; nor quite so far as the librarian who wished by means of the optical lantern to cast upon the walls of the public house opposite the library the legend "Why drink brandy and soda? Enter here and drink of the Pierian spring without saline accompaniments"; but I would have, at long intervals, a house to house delivery of a circular setting forth the fact that a library did exist in the town and that it was public. There are hundreds of people who believe that a burgess is a person who keeps a shop! And most of these believe that the signature of such a burgess is necessary as a guarantee of their suitability to borrow books. What has been done to dispel the idea? Not much in England.

I would have greater use made of the local newspapers; would publish in them regular lists of additions, as Leeds does,

even when it costs money to publish as it does at Tynemouth. I would have lists in parish magazines, in local society publications; in fact, anywhere we can get them in. I would have, if possible, the library report and current bulletin on every railway waiting-room table, in every restaurant—and every hairdresser's—in the town. There is nothing undignified and there may be much good in all this.

I would particularly plead for elasticity in the interpretation of our work. It is desirable not to overlap the work of the schools or other bodies, but where work may be duplicated with advantage and without ill results, it should be. I would also ask for fearlessness and confidence in the advocacy of our work. Some of the worst enemies of libraries are librarians, assistant and chief, who are so little sure of the value of their work that they dare not bring it to public notice.

W. C. BERWICK SAYERS.

The Negative.

Should libraries advertise? Before attempting to give an answer to this question it would be well to try and see what is the general function of modern advertising, and how advertisements are regarded by the public generally and by the educated public in particular. If an advertisement were defined as an attempt to give wide publicity to some article whose intrinsic merits were, in themselves, unable to command respect; we should feel that, though there would be something of exaggeration in such a definition, there would yet be very little absolute misrepresentation of facts in it. Even where there is no obvious advantage to the advertiser, such is the distrust of most intelligent citizens to all kinds of puffs that anything resembling advertisement is regarded as being fairly evident proof of an effort to cover up intrinsic defects by means of flashy extrinsic qualities which will not stand investigation. Carlyle's opinion that any form of advertisement is degrading has become almost axiomatic, and the advertiser is coming to be really regarded as "a poor braggart, fast hastening to be a falsity and speaker of the untruth."

There appears to be an opinion abroad that the public are not aware of the various ways in which the municipal libraries may be of assistance to almost anyone who is engaged in the search for knowledge on almost any subjects, and that it is the duty of the librarian to preach a crusade against this ignorance. I have never come into contact with such ignorance myself, and it has always seemed to me that the public has a remarkable instinct for a good library and an equally healthy contempt for an inferior one. Most individuals, it is true, have no very adequate idea of the literary treasures which are stored in a public library, nor is it very desirable that they should. But they generally

know perfectly well what they themselves want. If they are disappointed in this, they let the library alone and talk of the inefficiency of governmental educational machinery. If they are satisfied they become regular borrowers. In a good library any form of advertising is, I believe, simply useless. The books recommend themselves in a way which cannot be bettered. The effect produced by a librarian trying to persuade a fairly critical public that an inferior collection of books contains just what they want is pitiful.

Till now I have dealt with the problem from the point of view of the intelligent borrower; a being whom many of my colleagues seem to regard with the greatest distrust, although he is the only type of library-user who deserves serious consideration. There are, however, other types of borrowers—such as the “casual reader,” or “booklover” who occasionally manifest a mild and dilettante interest in matters intellectual. Such individuals might well be influenced by meretricious puffery. The acquisition of this class of borrower certainly gives the librarian and his staff a grand opportunity, not to be missed, of getting a cheap reputation for scholarship. That such an influence should be at work for the undoing of our professional standing is a great and terrible evil, against which all librarians who have the welfare of their calling at heart should unflinchingly set their faces.

JAMES D. YOUNG.

THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN: PRESENT AND FUTURE.

Presidential Address to the Midland Branch.*

By W. C. BERWICK SAYERS, President of the Library Assistants' Association.

Rudyard Kipling apostrophises Lord Roberts in two lines which, being translated into literary English, are as follows:

He is little, but he's wise,

He's a terror for his size,

and I ask you to allow me to apply them to the Branch Association, whose birth we witness to-night. Not offensively indeed; our numbers are small, but even the greatest movements, as the greatest rivers, have small sources; the Moravian Brotherhood, which has permeated Europe, began with a gathering of two or three; and, in a humbler way, our Library Assistants' Association, which is the largest purely professional library society in Europe, began with a few enthusiasts, who believed in their mission and in themselves. And following these ex-

*Delivered at the Central Public Library, Birmingham, on 10th February, 1910.

amples, in spite of difficulties, imaginary and actual, we have determined to do what we may to gather the workers in the Midland libraries, with a view, first to helping one another to a higher realisation of the moral responsibility we have incurred in adopting our calling, and then by improving and developing all our own abilities to help forward the movement for which every library worker stands, and, in this way to reap ultimate benefits to ourselves. Though we are few to-night, we earnestly believe in the wisdom of our meeting, of our intentions, and if, following the advice of Ruskin, we "thoroughly finish that which we have wisely begun," only good can accrue to us all. We shall be a "terror," too, not to chief librarians or library committees—we are not malcontents—but to apathy, to reaction, and above all, to discouragement and despondence. For these last enemies are insidious and are strong in the library world. The assistant cut off by the stern law of geography from the busier centres of library work is only too apt to take things as they come, to sink into a groove, and, if he be enthusiastic and no fuel from personal contact with other assistants be added to his enthusiasm, he is apt to shine well for a time, but seeing no fruition of his enthusiasm and receiving no praise, he is apt to let it smoulder out, and he himself finally becomes commonplace. Foremost and above all, this Association is the enemy of despondence, the upholder of enthusiasm; for, forgive the seeming vulgarity of the truth: the librarian without enthusiasm is damned.

Let it be understood at the outset that we are not a society in opposition to chief librarians; such a suicidal principle has no place in our dealings to-day. At one time a little self-assertion was necessary; the assistant had too long been regarded as a mere piece of mechanism, and had learned to recognise the verities expressed in the prayer:

God bless our chiefs and their relations,

And keep us in our proper stations;

but now the recognition of our actual personal and professional individuality has been won; not, I venture to believe, merely by self-assertion, but by demonstration of our own worth; and I am convinced that this is the better way, and that all our schemes of professional betterment must begin with ourselves, must come from within. As regards our chiefs; as they have learned to recognise our work willingly, so we in turn recognise that their welfare is our welfare, and that the greatest professional crime we can commit is disloyalty to the man who directs the system in which we work.

I regard an association as a personality. While it represents us all it is distinct in individuality. Let me explain. Every professional community is made up of enthusiasts, progressive men, and

men less progressive, or as I said a moment ago, despondents. Sometimes, indeed, the enthusiasm of the forward man outruns his wisdom. If wisely directed, that man may be useful, if without direction he may scintillate in dangerous fashion. But bring the enthusiast, the apathetic, and the despondent together in a group; each will have a reflective action upon the others, and the opinion resulting will not represent the enthusiastic to a nicety, nor will it absolutely or largely reflect the gloom of the pessimist; but usually it will be found to be a sane and solid opinion, restraining the one, stimulating the other. But let us beware in ourselves, and in others of apathy. The path to hell may or may not be paved with good intentions, but I know that the atmosphere that surrounds the man on the path to professional incompetence and even ruin, is that of "don't care." Such on the ideal side are our aims; what is the material to which we are to apply them?

The men I see here to-night are mostly seniors. This is right; we appeal to seniors; not as some have imagined, merely to schoolboys; we represent all grades under the principal rank in the profession. But we also want the junior assistant in this Association of ours; and I take it we shall get him, for where the wise senior goes the wise junior follows. We want to keep alive ideals even in the half-fledged lad who has just learned the rudiments of book-tagging. It seems satirical, does it not, to talk of ideals on six shillings a week? But it is not long since we too had vague aspirations on a small income. And the case is not so very sad after all. I believe that juniors on the whole are paid sufficiently. They compare their meagre salaries with those of the grocer's errand boy, and they seem at a disadvantage, but while the errand boy will be presently, unless he has force of character, a grown-up errand boy or labourer, the assistant may at least develop into something better; always providing he deserves to do so. Incompetence must always fail, and will always growl, in whatever walk of life; and I would point out to my junior friends that their small salaries are the wages of apprenticeship merely.

The library profession is in a curious state at present, and the position of the assistant librarian is ill-defined. In the public eye the librarian is something better than a clerk, but the public and even we, ourselves, have but vague notions as to our position among the professions. The work is genteel—ask any man—and our delightful occupation—ask the same man if it be not so—is to change books and to spend the greater part of the day reading them! Vague ideas of our salaries are current; I was asked seriously, only the other day of a librarian whose salary is £300 a year, whether his annual salary was not £1,000; "he had a comfortable berth," was a

"petty and indolent public official"—thus my inquisitor. And it is one of the difficulties of our calling that we must work quietly; we cannot sweep away boldly the public ignorance of our labours and our salaries. Indeed, how far should we drop in public estimation if the public generally knew how small were the wages of its literary director! England has innumerable snobs even fifty years after Thackeray satirised them. Still, when we consider it impartially, how much does any man know of any other man's profession? Usually his horizon is circumscribed by his own. To-day the average assistant is an elementary schoolboy. Sometimes this is very good material; we must not quarrel with it; but it is narrowly educated material. The elementary schools of to-day are more thorough in a few subjects than are the high schools, and they furnish a fine foundation for the industrious builder to erect his future education upon, if he has the good sense and industry to continue it. Such a lad, however, needs constant encouragement from his fellows; an unsympathetic senior may embitter his view and stunt his development by example or precept without very much effort. It does often happen that these unsympathetic conditions exist, and we, as an Association, may be potent to counteract them. We desire to win for the assistant and for the profession the recognition a man of social worth ought to receive; but an elementary schoolboy has a long and difficult road to travel before he obtains even a rudimentary claim to the mentality or prestige of a professional man. My own observation leads me to believe that the social status of a library worker to-day is an individual matter; in some towns the librarian is, and actually is recognised as being, what he should be; in others he is a mediocre clerk. It is simply because the one has developed the extraordinary opportunities for culture with which even the humblest librarians are surrounded, while the other is content to move along the groove his professional grandfathers delved. One has cultivated the social graces of life, and without these—tact, good taste, right feeling, wise action—no one can succeed in our calling; the other—but enough of him; examples are too frequent and too apparent to need pointing out or lingering over. Lately an artificial limit, somewhat in defiance of elementary economics, has been made to secure these desirable qualities ready-made. The Library Association has resolved that a lad ought not to become an assistant unless he holds some certificate equal to the university local examination, and has circularised library authorities to that effect. We shall see what we shall see, but unless some greater financial incentive to middle-class parents is offered than it is possible to offer

now, such a resolution unfortunately will be merely nugatory. But it is a symptom to be thought upon; it indicates that a disease exists or that something is wanting. Various ways have been suggested to secure the lad better educated initially. One is a probation system whereby a lad serves without remuneration for a certain time and is appointed or dismissed as his achievements seem to deserve. Another is a definite apprenticeship system. It is thought that the former—or in fact that both—of these methods will prevent parents who merely want their lad to be earning something, irrespective of his suitability for the work chosen, from allowing him to enter library work. If only we could offer a sure £250 a year or even £150 to a competent librarian how wise these methods would be! As it is they lack perspective. It is the tragedy of many an assistant that it is necessary for him to be earning early in life. At twenty he probably finds himself unsuitable for his work, but he cannot afford, or has not the courage, to change, and he remains and drifts on in a hopelessly mechanical manner. Something must be done to prevent this in future.

It must be clear to all that in other professions two grades of men exist, the professional worker and initiator, and the professional helper or clerk. Will such a division occur in our profession? The answer is that it already exists. In every large library there are mechanical assistants who are mentally incapable of becoming professional men, while as individually distinct are the assistants whose bearing and equipment stamp them as such. And comparing library and library, we see that one has the professional man in charge, the other the clerk and nothing more. Thus do mental levels adjust themselves; there is no such thing as socialism—in the debased sense of equality for all—in the intellectual world. At present each of these men is named a librarian, but in the days of large incomes, whenever they may come, nomenclature will adjust itself to actualities. To the incompetent, the content with things as they are, the apathetic, I say: beware of the raising of the rate limit; librarians are not the subjects of charity; your incomes will not be raised merely that your authorities may rejoice in your joy thereat. When it is possible to pay for highly trained librarians, be sure that they will be demanded, and that your capabilities will be thoroughly scrutinised. There is nothing for the energetic and the competent to fear in all this; indeed, it is the message of the larger hope. And the Library Assistants' Association does not exist to uphold incompetence!

Have you considered carefully the recent influx of women into library work? It needs careful consideration. Only last night I heard a young colleague of ours, with an energy, assurance and wit that promise well for his future,

declaim against their appearance in libraries. He lacked wisdom, and he had not read sociology. The economic conditions of our time make it necessary for numbers of women to support themselves, and unless some economic revolution, destructive of the present course of social evolution comes to pass, women in increasing numbers will endeavour to find sustenance in library work. Many of them pass out naturally—I can, for example, see a certain advantage to the librarian himself in winning a wife who has had a training in his own work—but, others may remain, and, although my own observation is that women as a general rule lack initiative, they are good, conscientious workers. I know some of them are, but

I have known girl assistants who enter libraries with the impudent assertion that they do so merely “to earn dress money,” whatever that may mean; and I have seen one girl demoralise a whole staff. Fortunately, such girls are in a very small minority, and I know of many who are capable, enthusiastic, trustworthy and entirely womanly at the same time. They create, however, a problem for us; at present they undersell us as women undersell men in every walk of life; but let us hope that women may be paid for equal work as much as men are paid. Then the competition will be fair, and only then. It has been suggested that as the tendency of girls is to leave for other life work before they reach a certain age, their employment will in time lessen the competition for higher positions and so increase the opportunities for the lesser number of men who will remain. We shall see.

Altogether, then, without being inspired to prophecy, it is safe to say that the future of the assistant will be a strenuous, exacting one; a future in which there can be no place for the mediocre. One library magazine has insisted that the public has no right to demand what the said magazine is pleased to call “cultchaw,” when it offers the assistant only “fifteen bob a week.” This maudlin sentiment, so elegantly expressed, is no kindness to assistants. It is better to tell them that with increasing public education, there will be increasing demands, and the librarian who cannot meet them, will be in parlous case.

Such are some of the conditions which we individually and as an association have to face. To this Branch I would commend the endeavour to preach this creed to assistants throughout the area it may cover; and as long as there is an assistant out of touch with his fellows here, that work is undone. I ask you to watch your officers and committee; to have sympathy with them, but to criticise rather than to ignore them. Let your meetings be vigorous, the freest of speech prevail, encourage the youngest to feel that he has part and lot with you. By means of evercirculators, reading circles, social events, and ex-

cursions, foster side by side high professional and warm social intercourse. The reward will be sure; for there has never been an active worker in this Association who, personally, has not been materially benefited by his work. And to each of you individually I say: preserve as a personal possession and privilege the highest ideals of your craft. The words of Anatole France—enfeebled by my poor translation—are better than any of mine: “Devote yourself to knowledge, but guard your visions. Oh, never lose in the contact with the arid reality the divine gift of dreams. Above all be not merely prudent, be not merely moderate; believe, dare!”*

NOTE.—The foregoing address was an extempore one, and I have written out just as much as I can remember. I hope, therefore, that anyone reading it who may find it too rhetorical—and I am sometimes accused of rhetoric by critics who fail to see any difference between what is written to be heard and what is written to be read—will remember that it is not intended as a literary composition.

THE JUNIOR ASSISTANT AND THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATES.

By CLAUDE F. G. TESSIER, Hornsey Public Libraries.

The majority of municipal libraries in this country fill the ranks of junior assistants by engaging boys of fifteen years or thereabouts, straight from the local council schools. These lads have been termed by writers in the pages of our professional journals, “raw material.” Perhaps they are; but raw material can be woven into finished goods, and it is of the process of weaving that I am about to speak. How shall the period between first starting work and when, in my opinion, the young man of twenty should commence the specialised study entailed by at least four of the sections of the L.A. Syllabus, be occupied?

I hold that it is quite possible for a junior to become thoroughly useful in his work if he will only apply himself to an intelligent study of the books that he will find within the library. Let him read these properly, and perhaps attend at an educational institution for an evening a week, and he will, between the ages of fifteen and twenty, lay a solid foundation of general knowledge and culture. Unfortunately, in a large number of cases, this is not done. The precious time is only too often frittered away in idle pleasure-seeking. But these five years are just the time to continue the education from the elementary to London Matriculation standard. It can be done without spending much money;

*Adonnez-vous à la science, mais gardez vos rêves. Oh ne perdez pas au contact de l'aride réalité le don divin des songes.....Surtout, ne soyez pas prudents ne soyez pas modérés, croyez, osez.

only an hour or two a day devoted to reading the books which are handled while on duty. Latin, French, English Language and Literature, Mathematics, and Geography and History will be found, perhaps, the best subjects to take, as a knowledge of all these will be very useful to the assistant in discharging his duties; and also when he is studying for the Diploma of the Library Association. If combined with a slight knowledge of the Natural Sciences, which is easily gained from the introductory manuals that abound nowadays, these subjects should give him an intellectual equipment that would stand him in good stead at the technical examinations. Which of these should be taken first? As English Literature is an important part of the London Matriculation examination, he would naturally, after having passed the latter, sit for his L.A. Literary History Certificate. Bibliography is allied to literature, so that will be tackled next. Both these subjects are mastered more by reading and study than the other sections in the Syllabus, which require experience, especially Library Routine; and then Library History, Organisation, and Equipment might follow, leaving Cataloguing and Classification until such time as the assistant has been engaged in their practical application.

The foregoing is put forward as perhaps worthy the consideration of those who are just starting on their career. It is merely an individual junior's opinion on juniors and their affairs. Yet there is something I earnestly wish to commend to the attention of my compeers. It is that we are the grade of assistants who come most in contact with the public. Many of the latter may be quite unconscious that our sub-librarian or senior assistant has passed with honours at a recent examination. But they are deeply conscious of our personal attitude towards them. This is our especial province. It is often trying, I admit: but to deal with thousands of polite or rude, intelligent or ignorant people in a satisfactory manner, is that which all junior assistants should make their first aim.

PROCEEDINGS.

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING.

The February Meeting of the Association was held, by kind permission of the West Ham Public Libraries' Committee, at the Central Library, Water Lane, E., on Wednesday the 9th. There were present about sixty members and friends. After an inspection of this magnificently appointed Library, the company were entertained to tea by the kind invitation of Councillor Enos Smith, Chairman of the Public Libraries' Committee. While tea was in progress, His Worship the Mayor extended to the Association a cordial welcome to West Ham, and in the course of a short speech, briefly outlined the history of the Library Movement in that Borough, quoting some interesting statistics relating to the work of the Libraries. The invitation was acknowledged by the President.

Councillor ENOS SMITH occupied the Chair, and after calling upon the Honorary Secretary to read the Minutes of the last Meeting, said that he was pleased to welcome an Association which was doing such a good work in helping the public to form a better judgment in reading. He thought it a hopeful sign, with so many bad books about, to see that the circulating Libraries were trying to help forward the desire for a better class of reading. The library assistant could do much by his personal influence to help this movement forward. As library assistants they should help to raise the tone of books. The CHAIRMAN then called upon Mr. CLAUDE TESSIER (Hornsey) to deliver his paper on "The Junior Assistant and the Library Association Certificates," the substance of which appears on page 109.

Miss OLIVE E. CLARKE (Islington) opened the discussion by deprecating the remarks made by the reader of the paper, regarding the employment of women in Libraries. She said that it was perfectly certain that women had as much right in libraries as men. She thought the responsibility of appointing inefficiently educated youths lay with the local authorities, because of the meagre advantages they offered. With regard to the desirability of obtaining the L.A. Certificates before matriculation, she differed totally from Mr. Tessier; she further disagreed with him regarding the order in which the L.A. examinations should be taken. At present the remuneration offered was totally inadequate, but she was optimistic and looked forward to better times.

Mr. G. R. BOLTON (Stoke Newington) agreed entirely with the previous speaker, and said that the young assistant drawn from the masses, as suggested by Mr. Tessier, would not have acquired the amount of education and literary style necessary to the successful passing of an examination of the Matriculation standard. He thought it were better for an assistant to take the easiest examinations of the L.A. first, working right through the Syllabus to Literature. Mr. J. D. STEWART (Islington) said the important question which Mr. Tessier raised was the order in which the certificates should be taken. It was entirely a matter of individual capacity and opportunity: some could pass the Matriculation examination at an early age with comparative ease. He thought it better to take the L.A. certificates first as it was the work in which the assistant was daily employed. The PRESIDENT (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers) said that Mr. Tessier had opened his paper with a question entirely apart from the subject of the paper, and before he lightly condemned the work of women he would advise his friend to read a little sociology; the conditions of modern life made it quite clear that library assistants must prepare themselves to accept women as co-workers and competitors. He agreed with Mr. Tessier that the study of literature should precede and accompany all other studies; a great many years' acquaintance with the outside of books was of small value in providing literary knowledge. Stopford Brooke's primer was an excellent index to pure literature, and might well be taken as the guide upon which the young assistant should base his reading; but actual contact with literature was necessary. He thought that experience in the library was the best preliminary to Sections 3 to 6 of the L.A. scheme, and thought it desirable before they were undertaken.

The CHAIRMAN said that his Committee had recently received a letter from the Library Association advising the appointment of properly qualified assistants, and it had been decided that they could not deal with the matter, as they were forced by financial limitations to employ boys just leaving school. He thought, however, that applicants should have a sound general education. When asking boys what kind of reading they liked best he had often received the reply "Adventures, Sir"; it was therefore the duty of the library assistant to help to raise the tone of reading. He had seen applications in which the spelling and composition were very bad, and in some cases the candidate could not even spell the word "Librarian." Mr. TESSIER in reply, said it was a

wrong method for the young assistant to take the Library Association certificates first, as by so doing he was starting an entirely new kind of work. It was more logical for him to take the University Local Examinations, which dealt more approximately with the work he had been doing at school. He could have no practical knowledge of library work until he had been several years at a library. MR. W. BENSON THORNE (Poplar) then rose to move the following resolution: "That this meeting of the Library Assistants' Association sends its new colleagues of the Midland Branch a cordial welcome to membership, and wishes the Branch a successful Inaugural Meeting, and a long, prosperous and useful career," in support of which he said that the following day (Thursday) would witness the inauguration of the Fifth Branch of the Library Assistants' Association, and the best wishes of this Meeting would go with their President who was to deliver the inaugural address at Birmingham. He would ask the President, too, to convey the Meeting's sincere appreciation of Mr. W. Ewart Owen's efforts in connection with the formation of this new Branch. MR. STEPHEN (St. Pancras) seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously, amidst applause. The CHAIRMAN then called upon MR. YOUNG (Greenwich) to open the debate in favour of the question "Are printed catalogues desirable in open-access libraries?" The PRESIDENT (Mr. W. C. BERWICK SAYERS) replied in the negative, and there was a brief discussion. The papers will be printed later. The CHAIRMAN, in terminating the discussion, regretted that the late hour rendered replies on the part of the openers impossible. MR. COUTTS moved a Vote of Thanks to the readers of the Papers, which was seconded by MR. BOLTON and carried by acclamation.

The PRESIDENT proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Councillor ENOS SMITH for presiding over the Meeting, and for his hospitality in providing refreshments, and to the West Ham Public Libraries' Committee for permission to meet at such a beautiful Library. MR. STEWART seconded, and the motion was carried. In reply Councillor SMITH said he was pleased to see the Association at West Ham and hoped it would not be long before they paid another visit.

MIDLAND BRANCH: INAUGURAL MEETING.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Midland Branch of the Library Assistants' Association was held at the Birmingham Central Library on Thursday, February 10th, when the following gentlemen were present:—W. T. CARTER (Warwick), H. W. CHECKETTS (Birmingham University), J. W. CLARKE (Birmingham), H. DIXON (Erdington), R. FENLEY (Rugby), P. FREER (Birmingham University), J. H. GIBBONS (Worcester), H. GRINDLE (Birmingham), M. C. HUNT (Birmingham), T. J. NEWELL (Aston), R. H. NEWELL (Handsworth), W. E. OWEN (Coventry), E. A. PEPIETTE (Birmingham University), WALTER POWELL (Birmingham), B. E. RATHBONE (Northampton), W. C. BERWICK SAYERS (Croydon), and R. H. TAYLOR (Birmingham).

The PRESIDENT of the Association (MR. W. C. BERWICK SAYERS) occupied the Chair, and warmly congratulated the assembly upon the successful formation of the Branch, and wished it a successful career. MR. H. W. CHECKETTS then read a paper on: "The Library in Utopia." He said that he proposed to review briefly some of the ideals to be attained, and some of the actualities which might be expected in the future. The dates 1850 and 1870, which saw the passing of the Public Libraries and Elementary Education Acts respectively, would be regarded as historic. As a result of these, a national taste for literature was slowly being developed, which it was the privilege of the library profession to encourage, both as regards the individual and society. Among the developments forecasted were included a national bibliography, greater specialization, interchangeability of tickets, borrowing facilities between different libraries, a more general adoption of scientific classification schemes, and of open-access to the shelves. The paper pointed out, however, that such changes would not be brought about

by any external pressure on the part of the public, but that the whole burden of reform rested with the Library profession. The paper will be printed in a later issue.

Considerable discussion followed, in which several interesting theories for the attainment of Utopian conditions in libraries were advanced. In acknowledging the vote of thanks passed for his paper, Mr. Checketts briefly replied to some of the opinions expressed, and added that, as his paper had been written largely with a view to provoking discussion, he was not able to support some of the Utopian, but impractical ideas he had placed before them.

The members were then conducted by Mr. Walter Powell, the Sub-Librarian of Birmingham, over the new book-store in the basement of the Central Library, which will accommodate nearly 100,000 volumes.

After tea the meeting proceeded to elect the Committee and Officers, and the following were elected:—Chairman: H. W. CHECKETTS, Sub-Librarian, University Library, Birmingham; Honorary Treasurer: H. GRINDLE, Deritend Branch Library, Birmingham; Honorary Secretary: W. E. OWEN, Sub-Librarian, Public Library, Coventry; COMMITTEE: J. C. Morgan, T. J. Newell, R. H. Newey, B. E. Rathbone.

The newly-appointed CHAIRMAN of the Branch then called upon the PRESIDENT to give the address on "The Assistant Librarian, Present and Future," which appears on page 103.

At the conclusion of the debate, Mr. Sayers was warmly thanked for his attendance at Birmingham and for his Address. Votes of Thanks were also passed to Mr. A. Capel Shaw, for granting the use of the Committee Room for the meeting, and to Mr. Walter Powell for his interest and assistance.

SOUTH WALES BRANCH: FEBRUARY MEETING.

The February Meeting was held on the 2nd, at the Central Library, Cardiff, Mr. R. G. Williams being in the Chair. Two subjects were down for discussion. The first was entitled: "The Apprentice and Probation Systems in Public Libraries: Are they Desirable?"

Mr. H. BOUGHTON opened in the affirmative and Mr. J. W. BUTTERWORTH replied.

The Hon. Secretary then read some notes entitled: "Should an Assistant be Apprenticed?" which the PRESIDENT (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers) had been good enough to forward.

In the discussion which followed, Mr. REES said that the right note had been struck when it was said that the prospects did not justify the introduction of an apprentice system. Mr. CONROY agreed that the prospects were not bright and considered that an apprenticeship system was unnecessary. Mr. BOUGHTON disagreed and said that the advantage of having apprentices was that they would take more interest in the work and do it more intelligently. The CHAIRMAN in summing up the debate, pointed out that an apprenticeship system would undoubtedly increase competition among assistants for appointments.

The feeling of the meeting generally was that the time has not yet come for the introduction of the apprentice system; while, as regards probationers, there was an unanimous opinion that they are undesirable.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced the subject of the second debate: "Should the L.A.A. have a more Definite Policy in Regard to the Wages and Conditions of Assistants?" and called on Mr. CHARLES SEXTON to open in the affirmative. Mr. E. J. Rees replied, and this was followed by the reading of some notes on the subject supplied by Mr. SAYERS.

The points raised in the papers were discussed at some length. The Hon. SECRETARY pointed out that, while an attempt to better conditions might not do much for assistants in the more favoured libraries, it would undoubtedly help less fortunate assistants. The Association itself would benefit, for, with increasing leisure, more time could be given to professional

affairs. Mr. REES said that for assistants to agitate would be of no use. The only way was to educate public opinion and to raise the standard of ability among assistants.

In reply Mr. SEXTON urged that assistants were already giving much time to professional studies, but that there was no prospect of improved conditions coming about in this way.

After the discussion the Chairman took a vote of the meeting upon the subject of the discussion. This resulted in a majority in favour of the view that "The L.A.A. should have a more definite policy in regard to the betterment of Wages and Conditions of Assistants."

The meeting closed with the passing of votes of thanks to the readers of the Papers, and to the President (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers) for his notes.

YORKSHIRE BRANCH.

The Third Annual Meeting of the Yorkshire Branch was held at the Leeds Institute, on Thursday, January 20th. Mr. G. W. Strother presided, and Members were present from Hull, Harrogate, Dewsbury, Bradford and Leeds. The Presidential Address was given by Mr. G. W. Strother, who spoke on the work the Branch was doing and urged every member to take a personal interest in its development. The Annual Report and Balance Sheet were presented and passed.

The Officers and Committee for 1910 are as follows:—

Officers and Committee:

PRESIDENT: Mr. G. W. Strother, Leeds; VICE-PRESIDENT: Mr. J. G. Sleight, Hull; TREASURER: Mr. W. Procter, Leeds; SECRETARY: Mr. J. B. Ellison, Leeds.

Committee:

Miss Harrison, (Leeds) 42; D. Sharphouse (Leeds) 39; J. C. Handby (Bradford) 36; E. Hunter (Hull) 36; F. J. Taylor (Barnsley) 34; Miss Mitchell (Keighley) 32; R. Ineson (Leeds) 30; W. Townsend (Hull) 30; Miss Blenkinsop (Bradford) 29; Miss Calam (Leeds) 27; Miss Seaton (Harrogate) 25; A. J. Hawkes (Leeds) 25.

Not Elected:—

S. M. Bryant (York) 21; Geo. Tomlinson (Leeds Institute) 20; W. H. Barraclough (Bradford) 19; W. C. Smith (Dewsbury) 18; T. R. Jackson (Dewsbury) 16; W. H. Atkinson (Bradford) 16; A. Dean (Hull) 9.

The Finances of the Branch are in good order, the year closing with a balance of £1. 0s. 3d.

The future meetings will be held on alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays in order to meet the wishes of all members.

Votes of thanks were passed to the retiring Officers and Committee for their services during the past session.

YORKSHIRE BRANCH BALANCE SHEET, 1909.

Income.		Expenditure.	
	£ s. d.		£ s. d.
Cash in Hand	2 4½	Proportion of Subs. sent to London	7 13 0
Subscriptions:		Rent of Room	5 0
Junior	4 15 0	Treasurer's Postages and Stationery	6 1½
Senior	5 10 0	Secretary's do.	1 3 0
		Balance in Hand	1 0 3
	<hr/> £10 7 4½		<hr/> £10 7 4½

Audited and found correct,
Ernest A. Hunter,
Jan. 19th, 1910.

A NEW IDEA AND AN OLDER ONE.*

The first book before us is not the earliest attempt to provide directions for those who would use libraries. To mention only two of many, there are Baldwin's "Book Lover," a charming guide to the uninitiated, and Spofford's "Book for All Readers." The last-named is an infinitely better book than the one we have now in our hands, is less superficial, and is better written; but it only partly covers the field covered by Mr. Stewart's book. Briefly, "How to Use a Library" is described on its title page as "practical advice to students and general readers, with explanations of library catalogues, a systematic description of guides to books, and a guide to special libraries." The list of special libraries is a compilation from Mr. Rye's "Libraries of London," and from "The Literary Year-Book." As far as librarians are concerned the two books mentioned are more useful than this. The series of guides to books is an alphabetic list of subjects, giving under each, the best, or a few of the best, bibliographies; this is valuable both to librarians and the general public. The first three chapters of the work deal, first, with reading and study, a series of comments, not over-original, on the pleasure and profit of reading, which are sound enough; second, on public libraries and their readers, in which we get the appalling figures worked out by Mr. J. D. Brown, as to the number of readers in libraries, and a discussion of the more important rules of the libraries; and third, with how to use library catalogues, in which the various forms of catalogue are discussed very briefly and we fear somewhat inadequately, and the use of classification—of course, the Subject Classification—is described. From these comments we wish it to be gathered that the book is addressed to the public and not to librarians. It contains points of suggestion for the latter, but we can imagine it to be a very valuable work for the general reader who is unacquainted with the customs of public libraries, and whose knowledge of how to approach the reading of a subject is somewhat vague. This work, superficial as it undoubtedly is, and bearing throughout signs of haste, is the first attempt made in this country to produce a volume specially on the public library for the general reader. It is a pioneer work in the right direction, and we cordially welcome it. The second work, "Guides to Book Selection," is sub-titled "A description of the principal aids and guides, with an index to subjects and statistical and financial factors," and is really a useful contribution to

*"How to Use a Library," by James Douglas Stewart, 83pp., 7in., cloth, Elliot Stock, Two Shillings net. "Book Selection," by James Douglas Stewart and Olive E. Clarke, 16pp., 9½in., paper wrapper, Libraco, Sixpence net.

librarianship. It is a select annotated list of guides to general bibliographical works of reference, of general guides on the choice of books, guides to current literature, and of special subjects, and there is a brief subject index. The annotations are brief, descriptive, and evaluative, but the evaluative factor is properly subordinated. The pamphlet opens with a brief introduction dealing with such things as the amount of money available in libraries for book purchase, and the proportional representation of classes of literature. We might criticise the following statement: "One of the most necessary aids to selection is a detailed classification scheme. The Subject Classification, owing to its enormous detail and clear arrangement, is the best, but the Decimal Classification or any other detailed scheme will serve." We shall not quarrel with it, however, as the authors' thorough-going loyalty to their chief and all his works receives our full sympathy. Altogether the authors are to be congratulated on the production of a brief but thoroughly sound piece of work, which will be useful to us all.

APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES.

*FAIRWEATHER, MISS LILIAN, Assistant, Islington Public Libraries, has been appointed Senior Assistant, Brighton Public Library.

HEADICAR, B. M., Branch-Librarian, Southwark Public Libraries, has been appointed Librarian of the British Library of Political Science in the London School of Economics.

The other selected candidates were Messrs. Abrams (Bodleian); *Dallimore (Wimbledon); McKnight (Chorley); *Rivers (Hampstead); *Thorne (Poplar). Messrs. Dallimore and Thorne were unable to be present for interview.

MAW, T. E., Librarian, King's Lynn, has been appointed Librarian, Luton Public Library.

The other selected candidates were Messrs. †Coltman (Southall); *Dallimore (Wimbledon); *Farrow (Lewisham); Hudson (Cheshunt); *Luke (Woolwich); Parsons (Glasgow); *Seward (Bromley); *Thorne (Poplar); *Wilson (Gateshead).

SYMINGTON, J. A., Assistant, Leeds Public Library, has been appointed Assistant, Leeds University Library.

*Member, L.A.A. †Fellow, L.A.A.

NEW MEMBERS.

Members: Miss Dorothy Ballen, British Library of Political Science; Victor B. Usherwood, Plumstead.

Associates: Frederick Boardman, Tyldesley; H. B. Cooper, Eastbourne; Miss M. Dean, Hindley; Fred Richardson, Lewisham; Miss Daisy N. Robson, Islington; Miss E. Z. Slorach, Hackney; Sydney G. Topping, Woolwich F. A. C. Tribble, Exeter.

Midland Branch.

Members: J. W. Clarke, H. Grindle, M. C. Hunt and R. H. Taylor, all of Birmingham; H. Dixon, Erdington; W. C. Farnell, Walsall; R. Fenley, Rugby; H. J. Homer and T. J. Newell, Aston Manor; F. C. Morgan, Stratford-on-Avon; R. H. Newey, Handsworth.

Yorkshire Branch.

Members: J. Arthur Butterfield, Bradford; N. Treliving, Leeds.

Associates: Miss Brown, Leeds; A. Denton, Bradford; Miss Hainsworth, Leeds; R. H. Stubley, Morley; Miss Walker, Leeds.